

National Survey of Family Growth

About NCHS

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS uses a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides a broad perspective on the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

National Survey of Family Growth

The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) collects information on families, fertility, and health from a national sample of males and females aged 15–49 in the household population of the United States.

The NSFG was conducted five times with a national sample of females aged 15–44 periodically between 1973 and 1995. A sixth periodic survey, conducted in 2002, included both males and females aged 15–44. In 2006, the NSFG shifted to a continuous, ongoing survey design, interviewing males and females. In September 2015, the age range was expanded to males and females aged 15–49.

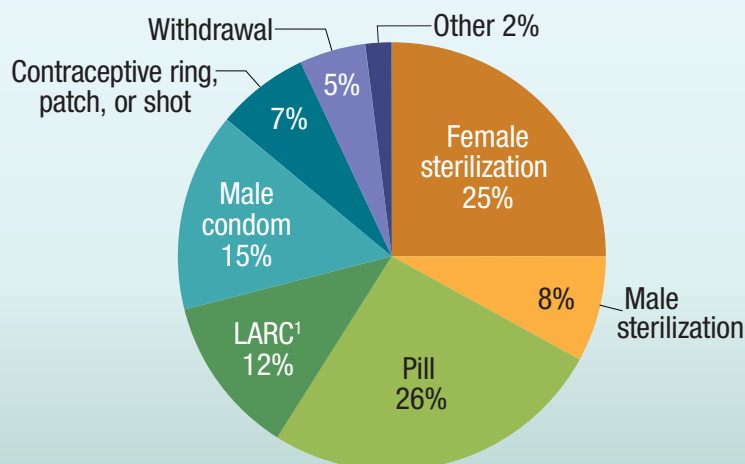
Topics addressed include:

- Marriage, divorce, cohabitation
- Pregnancy and birth history, and males' fathering of biological children
- Breastfeeding
- Adoption and nonbiological parenting
- Contraceptive use
- Intendedness of pregnancies
- Sexual activity
- Family planning and related medical services
- Infertility and use of infertility services
- Attitudes on sex, parenthood, marriage, and cohabitation
- Males' involvement as fathers with children they do and do not live with
- Sexual behaviors that may increase risk of HIV or sexually transmitted infections, including same-sex behavior
- Sexual orientation and attraction

In 2011–2013, the most popular methods of contraception among females aged 15–44 in the United States who were currently using contraception were the pill (26%), female sterilization (25%), the male condom (15%), and long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) (12%). Together, these four methods accounted for 78% of methods used by current contraceptive users.

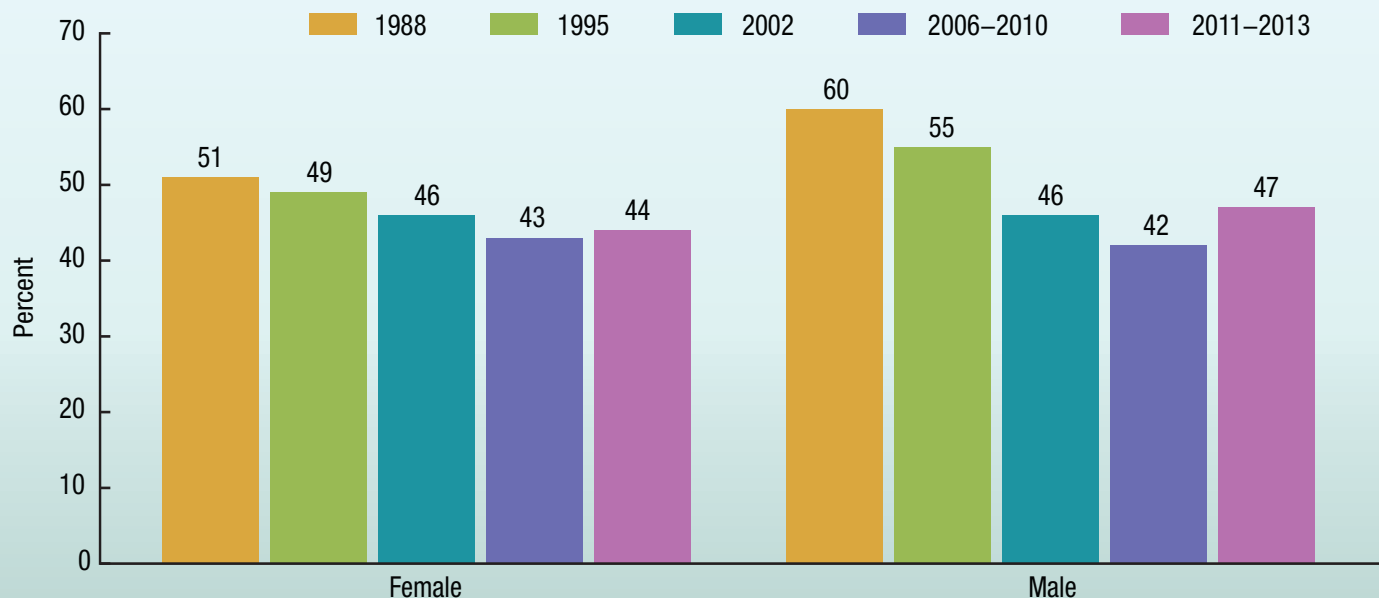
- Current use of the pill was higher among females aged 15–24 than other age groups. Female sterilization was the leading method among women aged 35–44.
- Similar percentages of Hispanic, non-Hispanic white, and non-Hispanic black females were using the male condom.
- Current use of LARC was similar across educational attainment.

Distribution of method use among all females aged 15–44 currently using contraception: United States, 2011–2013



¹LARC is long-acting reversible contraception and includes intrauterine devices (IUDs) and implants.
SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 2011–2013.

Percentage of never-married females and males aged 15–19 who have ever had sexual intercourse: United States, 1988–2013



SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 1988–2013, and National Survey of Adolescent Males, 1988 and 1995.

Sexual activity among teenagers

In 2011–2013, over 40% of never-married teenagers (aged 15–19) had ever had sexual intercourse.

- Among male teenagers between 1988 (60%) and 2002 (46%), there was a significant decline in the percentage who had sexual intercourse at least once. However, between 2002 and 2011–2013 (46% to 47%) there was no significant change in the percentage of male teenagers who had sexual intercourse at least once.
- The percentage of female teenagers who had sex at least once declined 14%, from 51% in 1988 to 43% in 2006–2010. The percentage in 2006–2010 was similar to that in 2011–2013 (44%).

Additional findings from the 2011–2013 NSFG

- NSFG data on breastfeeding show that more than 70% of singleton babies born between 2006–2009 were breastfed; about one-third of those were breastfed for 6 months or longer.
- More than one-half of males and females aged 15–44 in 2011–2013 had cohabited at some time; 15% of females and 13.5% of males were currently cohabiting.
- Approximately 26% of first births to females aged 15–44 in 2011–2013 were within a cohabiting union.
- About 19% of men aged 40–44 in 2011–2013 had not fathered any children, 21% had fathered one child, 29% two, and 31% had fathered three or more children.
- Overall, 19% of persons aged 15–44 in 2011–2013 had been tested for HIV in the past year, including 22% of females and 16% of males.
- In 2011–2013, 11.3% (6.9 million) of females aged 15–44 reported that they had received any infertility services.

Challenges and Future Opportunities

Future plans for NSFG include redesigning the survey questionnaire as needed to respond to changes in data needs in the area of reproductive health, family planning, and family formation. The survey will also continue to implement strategies to make continuous interviewing as efficient as possible in the face of declining response rates and other challenges.

